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THE TREPCA LEAD MINE IN KOSMET AND THE MINERAL RESOURCES OF MONTENEGRO

TREPCA LEAD MINE, EUROPE'S LARGEST -- Zurich, Neue Zuercher Zeitung, 16 Aug 51

The Trepca Mine in the Kosmet has the largest lead deposit in Europe. It is distinguished not only for its extent but also for the high metallic content of its ore. Today it is one of the most important sources of foreign exchange credits for Yugoslavia.

A monograph by Dr F. Schumacher entitled Die Lagerstaette der Trepca und ihre Umgebung (The Trepca Deposit and its Environs) was recently published in Belgrade by the Izdavacko Preduzece Saveta za Energetiku i Edstraktivnu Industriju Vlade FNRJ (Publishing Enterprise for the Council for Power and the Extractive Industry). The author, who gave up his teaching position at the Freiberg Mining Academy in Saxony in 1947 to work as a geological expert at the Trepca Mine until 1950, gives a detailed description of the geology, mineralogy, structure, and geological history of the deposit. The monograph also covers the mine's production. Although the postwar figures on production and reserves were not published in this work, they were made available to the American journalist John J. Christie who published them in the June 1951 issue of the Engineering and Mining Journal. The following information is based on the monograph of Professor Schumacher, the information given by Christie, and a personal visit made to the mine several weeks ago by permission of the Yugoslav Government.

The highest level of production for the prewar years was reached in 1939 - 1940 with 699,000 tons, 634,000 tons were produced in 1949, and 665,000 tons in 1950.

Approximately 10 billion tons of ore have been mined up to the present. Reserves are estimated at an additional 10 billion tons as follows: 3.7 billion tons of visible ore containing 7 percent lead, 4.2 percent zinc, and 124 grams

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of silver per ton; 2.2 billion tons of probable ore containing 6 percent lead, 3 percent zinc, and 100 grams of silver per ton; and a possible 4.3 billion tons of ore containing approximately 5 percent lead, 2 percent zinc, and 80 grams of silver per ton. The deposit will be exhausted in 15 years at the present rate of exploitation. It appears unlikely that new large-scale reserves of similar proportions will be discovered in the vicinity of the Trepca Mine.

Work is now going on at seven levels, the deepest being 200 meters below the valley of the Ibar River. It is presumed that ore deposits extend up to sea level. A cable railway connects the Stari Trg pit with the flotation center and with the Zvecan Smelter. The flotation installation produces lead concentrates with a concentration of approximately 80 percent, zinc concentrates with a concentration of approximately 50 percent, and pyrite concentrates with concentrations of approximately 45 to 50 percent. The pyrite concentrates are sold chiefly on the foreign markets inasmuch as there are no installations for the production of sulphur in Yugoslavia. Some of the zinc concentrates are processed in the zinc refinery at Celje in Slovenia (annual capacity of 12,000 tons), and the remainder are exported. Plans have been under consideration for the building of a second electrolytic zinc refinery with a capacity of 12,000 tons, but it is doubtful whether the capital and skilled workmen necessary for the building and operation of such an installation can be found.

Lead is secured from the lead concentrates by Newman-type furnaces. The lead refinery has been greatly expanded since the war. Six additional furnaces have been added to the original six British furnaces. Each of these 12 furnaces has a daily production capacity of 12 to 19 tons of lead, although furnaces of this same type in another Yugoslav installation have produced as high as 28 tons per day. The refinery has been equipped with 12 giant boilers with a capacity of 300 tons each, seven of which have been built since the war. Silver and bismuth in the raw lead are regained at the refinery. The lead is refined down to 99.9 percent pure lead.

The Zvecan Smelter also processes the ores from the Zletovo Mines (prewar production some 150,000 tons of ore), and from small Serbian mines which have only recently begun exploitation operations, such as the Kopaonik, Novo Brdo, Ajvalija, and Janjevo mines. The Zvecan Smelter produces more than 50,000 tons of lead annually. It is hoped that this can be increased to 80,000 or 100,000 tons when all the aforementioned mines are in full operation.

At present, 5,000-6,000 persons are employed in the Trepca Mine and in the Zvecan Smelter. The majority of these are Albanians from surrounding villages. The work performances of older workers are considered good, whereas those of younger workers are considered poor because they are poorly qualified for the hard work because of their poor diet.

The operation of the mine is not satisfactory. The mine is poorly ventilated and no adequate security measures are in force. Even the organization in the smelter area leaves something to be desired. Some of the shortcomings are minor ones which are bound to arise when a well-trained management is replaced by a new administration which still lacks an adequate supply of trained personnel.

Basic repairs are forgotten because of the desire to keep production going; when repairs are necessary, only provisional ones are made. There is a tendency to limit mining to the richer ores, so that the poorer grades of ore which would be worth exploiting only in connection with the richer ores, are lost entirely.

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EXPLOIT MINERAL RESOURCES OF MONTENEGRO -- Zagreb, Narodni List, 2 Feb 52

Geologists estimate that Montenegro has over 200 million tons of coal reserves in the vicinity of Plevlje, and approximately 100 million tons of white and red bauxite. A montmorillonite mine with an estimated reserve of approximately 25 million tons has already been opened near Petrovac. There are indications of manganese ore near Budva, and iron ore in Sozina. Petroleum has been discovered in this area; a third oil-drilling tower is to be erected soon.

Experts estimate that the newly opened "Suplja Stijena" Mine alone has about 450,000 tons of lead and zinc ore, containing 9 percent lead and 16 percent zinc. The Brskovo Mine, which dates back to medieval times, has been reopened. Research has shown that the Brskovo Mine has considerable reserves of lead and zinc mixed with silver, gold, and copper.

Exploitation of these mines has not been possible because of their inaccessibility and because of insufficient mechanization and a lack of experienced miners. To date, 45 kilometers of roads and 10 kilometers of cableways have been constructed to the mine areas. The "Suplja Stijena" Mine and some other mine sites have been electrified, and housing for miners is under construction.

A laboratory for research on bauxite has been opened in Niksic. In 1952, bauxite production is to be doubled or tripled because bauxite is in great demand abroad. Montmorillonite is to be exported also.

UNCOVER RICH COAL DEPOSITS -- Zagreb, Borba, 18 Dec 51

Despotovac, 17 December -- Recent exploration in the Despotovac coal fields has uncovered 3-meter-thick seams of new coal with a calorific value of 5,000 calories in contrast to the 3,500 to 4,000-calorific value of the coal previously mined here.

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